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## Centinel XV

Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 22 February 1788

TO THE PEOPLE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

*Fellow-Citizens*, . . . It is the peculiar misfortune of the people of these United States, at this awful crisis of public affairs, to have lost this useful, this absolutely necessary jealousy of innovation in government, and thereby to lie at the mercy and be exposed to all the artifices of ambition, without this usual shield to protect them from imposition. The conspirators, well aware of their advantage, have seized the favorable moment, and by the most unparalleled arts of deception, have obtained the sanction of the conventions of several states to the most tyrannic system of government ever projected.

The magic of great names, the delusion of falsehood, the suppression of information, precipitation and fraud have been the instruments of this partial success, the pillars whereon the structure of tyranny has been so far raised. Those influential vehicles, the newspapers with few exceptions, have been devoted to the cause of despotism, and by the subserviency of the P—O—, the usefulness of the patriotic newspapers has been confined to the places of their publication, whilst falsehood and deception have had universal circulation, without the opportunity of refutation. The feigned unanimity of one part of America, has been represented to produce the acquiescence of another, and so mutually to impose upon the whole by the force of example.

The adoption of the new constitution by the convention of the state of Massachusetts, by a majority of nineteen out of near four hundred members, and that too qualified by a number of propositions of amendment, cannot afford the conspirators much cause for triumph, and especially when all the circumstances under which it has been obtained, are considered. The late alarming disorders which distracted that state, and even threatened subversion of all order and government, and were with difficulty suppressed, occasioned the greatest consternation among all men of property and rank: in this disposition even the most high toned and arbitrary government became desirable as a security against licentiousness and agrarian laws; consequently the new constitution was embraced with eagerness by men of these descriptions, who, in every community, form a powerful interest, and added to the conspirators, office-hunters, &c. &c. made a formidable and numerous party in favor of the new constitution. The elections of the members of convention were moreover made in the first moments of blind enthusiasm, when every artifice was practised to prejudice the people against all those who had the enlightened patriotism to oppose this system of tyranny: thus was almost every man of real

ability, who was in opposition, excluded from a seat in the convention; consequently the contest was very unequal; well-meaning, though uninformed men, were opposed to great learning, eloquence and sophistry in the shape of lawyers, doctors and divines, who were capable and seemed disposed to delude by deceptive glosses and specious reasoning; indeed, from the specimens we have seen of the discussion on this occasion, every enlightened patriot must regret that the cause of liberty has been so weakly, although jealously advocated, that its champions were so little illuminated. In addition to these numerous advantages in the convention, the friends of the new constitution had the weight and influence of the town of Boston to second their endeavors, and yet, notwithstanding all this, were near losing the question, although delusively qualified. Is this any evidence of the excellency of the new constitution? Certainly not. Nor can it have any influence in inducing the remaining states to accede. They will examine and judge for themselves, and from their wisdom in taking due time for deliberation, I have no doubt will prove the salvation of the liberties of the United States.

CITE AS: *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, ed. John P. Kaminski, et al, Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XVI, No. 4, (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1986), 189-91.